

### **Remarks**

Claims 1-3 stand objected to. Claims 1-3 have been cancelled herein. New claims 4-10 have been added. New claims 4-6 reflect PCT Article 34 amendments made to the international application, PCT/JP03/02218, from which the present application claims priority. In response to the Examiner's objection, Applicants request that the Examiner consider the new claims.

As clarified in new claims 4-10, the claimed invention is an air-curtain forming apparatus. The claimed apparatus is designed to be attached to semiconductor-fabrication equipment, particularly at the periphery of an opening in the semiconductor-fabrication equipment. In the minienvironment system, a wafer may be transferred from a hermetic container to the semiconductor-fabrication equipment through the opening in the semiconductor-fabrication equipment, or alternatively from the semiconductor-fabrication equipment to the hermetic container, for example when transferring a processed wafer back into a hermetic container.

The air curtain forming apparatus includes the elements as enumerated in each respective claim. The present claims do not, however, limit the application of the claimed apparatus to use with a single hermetic container. The claims merely indicate that the apparatus is for attachment to equipment in a system that allows wafers to be transferred between a container and the equipment in such a manner that the air curtain formed by the air curtain forming apparatus prevents ambient air from entering a gap or passage that may be present between the container and the semiconductor fabrication equipment. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of all pending claims.

The Examiner is invited to contact Applicants' undersigned representative to expedite the resolution of any remaining questions or concerns.

Enclosed is a petition for a two month extension of time. Please charge Deposit Account No. 19-4972 the required fee of \$460.00 as set forth in 37 C.F.R. §1.17(a)(2). Applicants believe that no additional fees are due at this time. If any additional fees are

required for the timely consideration of this application, please charge deposit account number 19-4972.

Respectfully submitted,

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